(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Indians in jails of Nepal

2519. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:
SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that in Nepal, more than 300 Indians are in their prisons, many of them being innocent as there is no evidence against them;

(b) if so, whether through our Embassy, Government would take up the matter with appropriate authorities in Nepal, to seek earlier trial of such accused, so that innocent Indian nationals do not continue to languish in Nepalese prisons; and

(c) the number of Indian women who are incarcerated in Nepal?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) As on 1.6.07.2007, there were 339 Indian nationals in various prisons in Nepal, arrested on charges related to violation of local laws. As and when any information is received about innocent Indians being imprisoned, the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu maintains a close contact with concerned authorities in Nepal to expedite the trial.

(c) As on 16.07.2007, there were two Indian women imprisoned in Nepal.

Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal

2520. SHRI SYED AZEEZ PASHA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the 123 Agreement of the India-US civilian nuclear deal has ignored vital interests and increased dependence on the US;

(b) if not, the facts in this regard;

(c) the financial viability of the entire Agreement and the total cost benefit; and

(d) whether Government are aware of the Left's objection *i.e.* Government to desist from proceeding with the negotiation for the 123 Agreement until the inimical provisions of the Hyde Act are cleared out of the way?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) No. Prime Minister in his statement in the Parliament on 13 August, 2007 has made it clear that in concluding this agreement the Government have ensured that the autonomy of strategic programme is fully maintained and that the Agreement in no way curtails, inhibits or restricts our strategic autonomy or capabilities. Our rights to pursue our three-stage nuclear programme remain undiluted.

(c) As the Agreement is not a commercial contract, it is not possible to calculate its financial viability or total cost-benefit. However, the Agreement would certainly

have major benefits for the development of India's industries, both public and private. High technology trade with the US and other technologically advanced countries would also expand.

(d) Yes, Sir.

New division of energy security

2521. SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a new Division of Energy Security has been created in his Ministry;

(b) the objective of creating such a Division; and

(c) the steps that have been taken during the last three years to enhance India's Energy Security?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ANAND SHARMA): (a) and (b) It has been decided to establish an Energy Security Division in the Ministry of External Affairs. The main objectives of the new Division are the following:

(i) To serve as a nodal point in MEA for Energy Security. The Unit would sensitize and assist our Missions abroad in identifying possible opportunities for Indian companies.

(ii) To maintain close coordination with the concerned Ministries and support their international engagement through appropriate diplomatic interventions.

(iii) To support efforts of our corporate entities, in acquiring energy assets overseas, and in building strategic partnerships with foreign companies.

(iv) To promote the transfer of new and emerging energy technologies to India; and

(v) To interface with leading energy security think tanks and experts in India and abroad on energy-related issues.

(c) Energy Security has been an integral part of our bilateral discussions with several of the energy resource rich countries. Our Missions have taken active interest in identifying the emerging opportunities in the energy sector and are keeping Indian companies and concerned Ministries continuously informed of developments in this regard. Government of India and Indian oil companies have concluded several arrangements including investment agreements with many countries for the supply of oil and its derivatives to India, and in most of the cases delivery has begun. In addition, the possibility of bilateral cooperation in the areas of oil, natural gas, petrochemicals, hydrocarbons, non-conventional energy, and joint ventures are also constantly being explored with various countries including Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Brazil, Colombia,